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FROM

Miss Abby L. Pierce

LETTER

OF

REV. JOSEPH RICHARDSON,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PARISH IN HINGHAM,

TO HIS PARISH,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

EXCHANGES OF PULPIT SERVICES WITH THE MINISTERS OF THE OTHER RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES IN SAID TOWN;

THE

REPORTS OF A COMMITTEE

AND

THE RECORD OF THE VOTES OF THE FIRST PARISH THEREON;

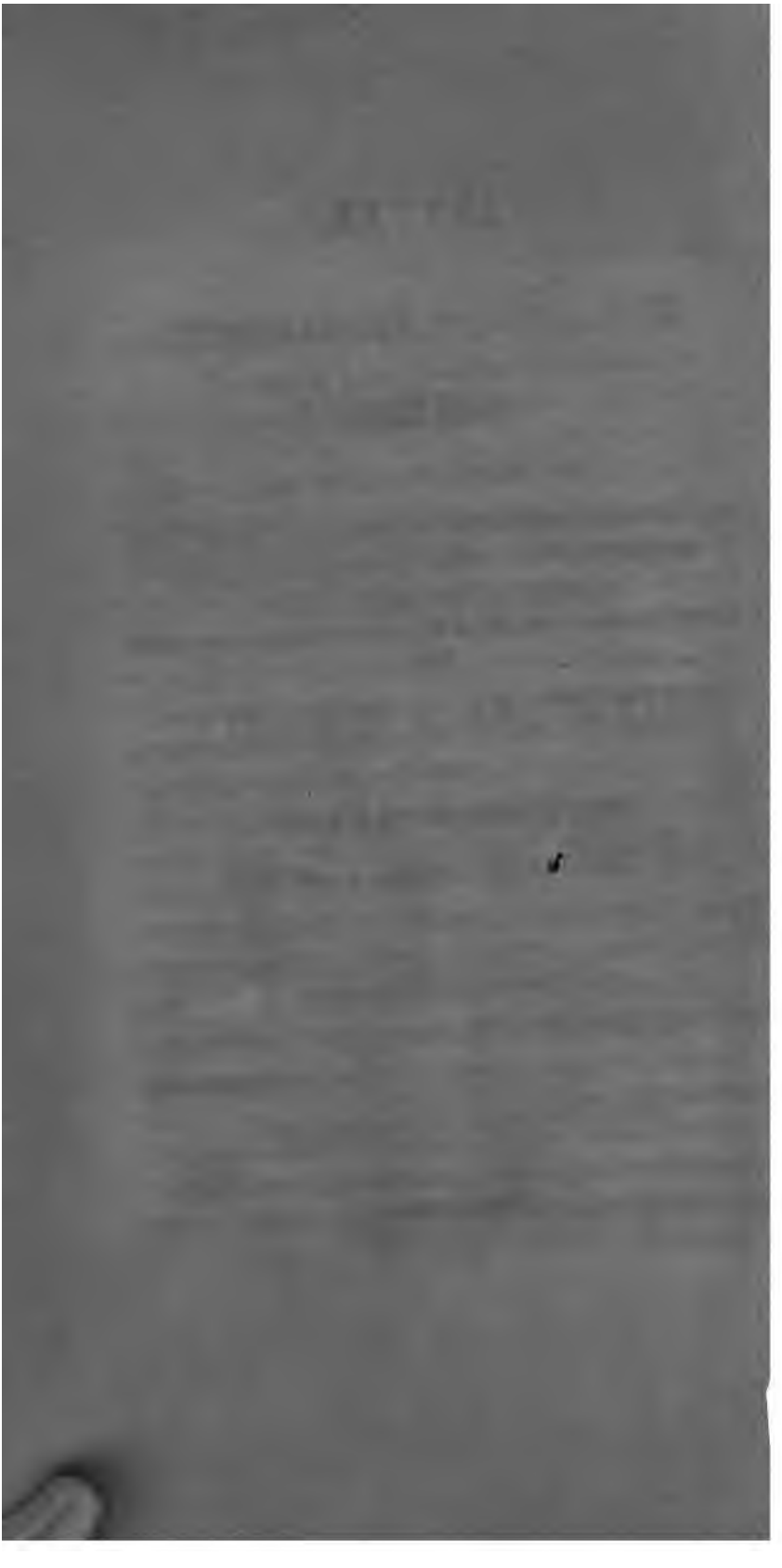
AND A

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH FOUR OF THE OTHER RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES IN SAID TOWN.

PRINTED FOR THE USE OF THE FIRST PARISH.

Hingham:
JEDIDIAH FARMER, PRINTER.
1847.



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1851 Dec 11

Life of Mrs. Abby L. Price of Brookline

LETTER.

To the Members of the First Parish in Hingham, in meeting assembled:

Brethren—Desirous that those who worship one common Father, and are friendly to the Christian Religion, though of different sects and denominations, may live in the most perfect charity and harmony, and in the unity of the spirit of the Gospel, I have thought it would well become this Parish, among the earliest founded in the land, and the earliest and steadiest in maintaining order and peace among themselves, to propose a measure of conciliation and kindness towards all the other religious societies in our town.

The proposal suggested I would respectfully submit to the Parish in this form:

Will it be agreeable to this Parish for their Minister to propose exchanges of pulpit services, occasionally, with the Ministers of all the other Parishes, or Religious Societies, in the Town?

Should this proposal not meet the general approbation of the Parish, or should it give serious displeasure to any, I should not wish to press it with urgency.

My wish is that this Parish and their Minister, may, in all things, set an example worthy of the Christian spirit and character; that, whilst firm in integrity, they may be ready to extend *to* others the charity and liberality they may reasonably hope to meet *from* others.

Regardless of our different views of religion—on various occasions of deep and solemn interest, we meet and mingle in the joyous sympathies of life, and lift up to the Being who gave us the power to praise, our united, grateful hearts and voices.

In the house of mourning we meet, and there unite in paying the tribute of affection to the memory of the departed.

We walk together to commit the loved shade to its last repose. Would it not be profitable to improve other occasions to hush the dissentions and discords that mingle unhappiness in this brief life?

Whatever may be the result of the proposal now submitted, to my own mind it will be a satisfaction to know, that we have endeavored to perform a duty of conciliation and kindness towards those for whom we entertain no other than sentiments of true regard.

With much pleasure, I remember, that this Parish has ever accorded to their minister an unrestricted liberty in respect to exchanges. Yet an expression of their approbation, that their minister should extend ministerial exchanges, more liberally than has been customary between the ministers of the religious

societies of the town, would relieve him of a responsibility that properly belongs to the Parish, to whose improvement, and for whose benefit, the pulpit and the public worship have been consecrated. In bonds of Christian love,

You devoted servant,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Hingham, March 4, 1845.

At a legal meeting of the members of the First Parish, in Hingham, March 4, 1845, the foregoing communication of the Rev. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, was presented and read, and it was

Voted, To refer its consideration to a Committee of fifteen persons, to report thereon, to the Parish on some Sabbath after meeting.

The following gentlemen were chosen to constitute that Committee, viz:

SOLOMON LINCOLN, BENJAMIN PARKER, SCARLET HUDSON, JOHN K. CORBETT, CHARLES FEARING, BENJAMIN THOMAS, CALEB HOBART JR., NEHEMIAH RIPLEY, ELIJAH BURR, THOMAS LOUD, JEDIDIAH LINCOLN, LUTHER STEPHENSON, DAVID FEARING, CHARLES GILL, and MARTIN FEARING.

Attest:

JAS. S. LEWIS, Clerk of the First Parish.

At the Annual Meeting of the Members of the said First Parish, held March 9, A. D. 1846, the above named Committee presented the following Report, which was read and unanimously accepted.

The Committee to whom was referred a communication made to the Parish at its last annual meeting, by Rev. Mr. Richardson, our Pastor, on the subject of exchanges of pulpit services with the ministers of the other religious societies, in this town, respectfully

REPORT,

That the subject of the Pastor's communication has engaged the serious attention of the Committee; but from various causes a report has been delayed so long, that they have ventured to present it, in the first instance, to the Parish, at the annual meeting, for deliberate consideration, especially as such a course will not preclude its being read to the Congregation on the Sabbath, as originally contemplated.

Waiving any discussion of the relative rights of ministers and people on the subject of the control of the pulpit, a topic suggested by the deference paid by our pastor to his people in his communication to the Parish, we content ourselves with remarking that this religious society has never expressed a wish to exercise any control over ministerial exchanges; preferring to leave the pulpit free, to be filled in such manner as the discretion and convenience of our Pastor should dictate.

In replying to his communication, we propose at once to speak of the prominent facts connected with our relations to the other Societies in this town, feeling no distrust of the manner in which we ought to treat the subject, impressed as we are with the weight of obligation resting upon us to do all that a conscientious regard for duty requires, to promote the cause of

christian charity and truth. We intend to express our feelings and sentiments in language so plain, as, if possible, to avoid mistakes or misapprehension.

As the oldest Society in this town, and "among the earliest founded in the land," we have a great duty to perform, to take good care that our example shall be what it ought to be, full of kindness and conciliation. This Parish is now two hundred and ten years old. The labors of its five Pastors, HOBART, NORTON, GAY, WARE and RICHARDSON, cover a period of more than two centuries, and the last mentioned is now in the fortieth year of his ministry. Since the organization of this Parish, five other religious societies have been formed within the present limits of this town; and nearly or quite all of them derived a large portion of their members, at the time of their establishment, from this society.

To speak of them in their order: The Second Parish or Society has always entertained religious opinions similar to our own. It was formed about a century since, in the midst of the ministry of Dr. GAY. Between their first Pastor, Dr. SHUTE, who was distinguished for many excellent qualities, which are ornamental to the clerical character, and our venerated GAY, "whose praise was in all the churches," there was a friendly intercourse during their long and useful ministries. In Dr. SHUTE'S discourse at the funeral of his deceased friend, he speaks in the most impressive terms of the great qualities which marked his character, and of the long and uninterrupted friendship which subsisted between them.

There was a suspension of pulpit exchanges between Dr. SHUTE's successor (Rev. Mr. WHITNEY) and our present Pastor, which, however, were happily renewed before the decease of the former, and, as we believe, with the cordial approbation of the people. Our present relations to that Society and their Pastor (Rev. Mr. RUSSELL) are of the most friendly character, and, we trust, will not again be interrupted. Entertaining like views of the Christian religion, we wish not to forget that we can have but little of its spirit without charity, and few of its fruits without peace.

The Third Society was founded under circumstances yet fresh in the recollection of a few members of the Committee. It was composed of persons who withdrew on account of the settlement of our present Pastor. A large portion of both Societies who took an active part in promoting or opposing his settlement have deceased, and nearly forty years have elapsed since that event. We have no desire nor intention to go into an examination of the unfortunate difficulties which have been so injurious in their consequences to the civil, social and religious interests of this community. Many of us were too young to participate in the controversy, and we have no desire to revive it.

But we look at things as we find them, after a period has elapsed covering the largest part of half a century; and after a careful survey of the whole ground, and of every fact in the case, which, upon any principle of Christian Charity, can be admitted to have any weight in such an examination—we present this state of facts:

We find two neighboring Societies, composed of members associated in the daily walks of life on terms of friendly intercourse, intimately connected by their various worldly interests, bound together by ties of blood and intermarriage—entertaining and professing the same religious opinions, so far as we understand them, and yet from some cause not very well understood by us, no intercourse between these Societies, as such, is permitted to take place; none of the usual marks of Christian fellowship are interchanged between them; and they are in some respects as wide apart as if entertaining the most opposite and antagonist religious prejudices—when, in point of fact, upon all the great points of Christian truth there is a perfect harmony in their sentiments.

We have said that we shall not go into a history of causes which could legitimately produce this state of things—indeed, we know of no adequate cause for it, to be found in any such history; and we now unanimously declare that we know of no sufficient and justifiable reason why these two neighboring Societies should not, as such, be upon the most friendly terms of Christian intercourse, and why their respective Pastors should not show to each other the usual courtesy of Christian Fellowship, by an exchange of pulpits.

If it is supposed by any one out of this Society, that there are any obstacles, hindrances or opposition in the First Parish, to a more friendly or Christian relation between these two Societies and their Pastors, we believe that such are in great error. We disclaim fully and freely, any motive, feeling, prejudice or desire, which should prevent an interchange between

these parishes, of the same friendly feelings, in all their public relations, which are felt and expressed by their members towards each other in the relations and intercourse of private life. And the Committee feel it to be their duty to say, that they believe, *when* there shall be expressed by the Third Society and their Pastor, views of this subject, and of their relations to the First Parish, similar in their character and spirit to those herein expressed by us, that no obstacle would or could remain to prevent the consummation proposed and desired by our Pastor.

The Committee have thus expressed their own opinions, and trust that they may receive the approbation of the Parish. If there are any in the community who do not understand, or who misrepresent us, let the former be enlightened, and the latter rebuked. And if there should be no response to what we believe to be the general feeling of our own Parish, we must place our reliance upon the hope that a century may obliterate impressions and correct opinions which nearly half that period shall have been unable to efface—impressions and opinions which we apprehend cannot be maintained for a moment, when brought to the searching tests of the religion we profess to support.

We repeat, that we are not aware of any justifiable reason for the continuance of the existing state of things; and we believe it to be our duty, and the duty of every good citizen, who feels any proper regard for the character of this ancient town—of every believer of the truths of Christianity, and of every true friend of Christian institutions, to do all that is possible, con-

sistent with truth, to root out every vestige of the evil which has been too long continued among us.

There are, also, in this town, besides the three Societies of Unitarians, one of Methodists, one of the Baptist and one of the Universalist denomination. These also, are made up of our neighbors and friends. By some of them, we suppose, we are regarded as believing too much, and by others, too little. Our own opinion is, that the points upon which we differ are of far less importance than those in which we agree; and that, if we thought more upon our agreements, and less upon our differences, we should all be better men, better citizens, and far better Christians.

We have no doubt that if exchanges were to be conducted between ministers of all denominations, in the right temper and spirit—if each should deem the occasion of such exchanges fit opportunities to set forth with clearness and force the great truth, which the late eminent Dr. ARNOLD, of the English Church, regarded as the "very truth of truths," viz: that "Christian unity and the perfection of Christ's Church are independent of theological articles of opinion, consisting of a certain moral state and moral and religious affections, which have existed in good Christians of all ages and all communions along with an infinitely varying proportion of 'truth and error'"—in such cases, exchanges of pulpits between ministers of differing opinions, might produce an immense change in the present condition of society, and stamp a new and beautiful impression upon the character of the age.

The Committee are not averse, and they venture to say, that the Parish is not opposed to hearing the great truths of Christianity expounded occasionally to them by sincere believers of any denomination of Christians. We are not aware that any preacher of the Gospel was ever excluded from the pulpit of the First Parish, on any occasion, on account of his religious opinions; and while we are prepared to admit that frequent and indiscriminate exchanges with all denominations might not tend, in some respects, to the edification of the people, yet we think that all would be pleased with any arrangement which should in the slightest degree promote Christian charity.

As confirmatory of our views of a free pulpit, and as proof of the practical conformity of this Parish to them, we might cite the names of a large number of eminent clergymen, of different denominations of Christians, who have preached in the pulpit of the First Parish, since the settlement of our present Pastor, embracing Methodists, Baptists, Restorationists, Calvinists, Episcopalians, and others.

Upon the principles which we have suggested, we have no objection to hearing our neighbors of differing denominations; on the contrary, we should be gratified, if those of our societies and pastors who differ, as well as those who agree with us, in religious sentiments, should, in a spirit of liberality and heavenly charity, concur with our wishes, and signify a willingness to offer to, or receive from us, the hand of fellowship in the true spirit of the religion of Jesus Christ.

The Committee have thus, in a rapid manner, spoken of the existing state of things, and given expression to those views of

the subject of Mr. RICHARDSON'S communication, in which they are unanimously agreed; and if those views shall be such as the Parish sanction and approve, it is proposed that copies of the Pastor's Letter, of this Report, and of the Record of the Action of the Parish in relation thereto, be communicated to each of the other Religious Societies in town, through their respective Pastors,—as a manifestation to them all of the feelings of the Pastor and People of the First Parish towards them,—commending the matter to the candid consideration of each, to determine what measures, if any, it may be their pleasure to adopt, to promote the great cause of Christian Charity and Truth in this community.

All which is respectfully submitted, by order of the Committee.

SOLOMON LINCOLN.

Hingham, March 9, 1846.

At said meeting, it was

Voted, To accept the foregoing Report, and that the Clerk be requested to furnish the Rev. Mr. RICHARDSON with a sufficient number of copies of his Letter to the Parish, of the Report, and the Record of the Action of the Parish thereon, with a request that he communicate one copy thereof to each of the other Religious Societies in town, through their Pastors, together with a copy of this vote.

The foregoing are true copies—Attest:

JAS. S. LEWIS, Clerk of the First Parish.

Hingham, March 9, 1846.

At the annual meeting of the Members of the First Parish, in Hingham, held March 8, A. D., 1847, the following Report was presented and read:

The Committee of the First Parish, in Hingham, to whom was referred a Letter from their Pastor, addressed to the Parish, March 4, 1845, on the subject of Ministerial Exchanges, now offer this

SECOND REPORT.

The first Report of this Committee was made to the Parish at its annual meeting, held March 9, 1846, and was accepted. In compliance with a recommendation made in that Report, the Parish

"*Voted*, That the Clerk be requested to furnish the Rev. Mr. RICHARDSON with a sufficient number of copies of his Letter to the Parish, of the Report, and the Record of the Action of the Parish thereon, with a request that he communicate one copy thereof to each of the other Religious Societies in town, through their Pastors, together with a copy of this vote."

Agreeably to the foregoing request of the Parish, their Pastor communicated to the several Societies, copies of the Letter, Report and Record, accompanied by a note, a copy of which is hereto annexed.

Mr. RICHARDSON was also notified of a vote of this Parish by which this Committee were "requested to take such farther action in relation thereto as in their opinion circumstances may require."

Communications were received by him from all the Religious Societies in town, excepting the Methodist Society, and they were delivered by him to this Committee, by their request, that they might be in possession of all the facts and circumstances, which, with reference to the vote last mentioned, might require further action.

These several communications have been read to the Congregation of this Parish, by order of the Committee, and now, by their direction, they are annexed to this Report, in the order of their reception, and submitted to the disposition of the Parish, without note or comment.

The Committee, having now, as they believe, taken all such action in relation to the matters referred to them, as circumstances seem to have required, respectfully ask leave to be discharged from the further consideration of the subject.

By order of the Committee.

SOLOMON LINCOLN.

Hingham, March 8, 1847.

Voted, To accept the foregoing Report.

Voted unanimously, That the Rev. Mr. RICHARDSON'S Letter to his Parish, on the subject of Ministerial Exchanges, the Reports of the Committee, and the Record of the Action of the Parish thereon, together with the several Communications which have been received from the other Societies, in this town, in relation to the subject, be printed for the use of the Parish, under the direction of the Parish Committee.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Note of Rev. Mr. RICHARDSON, referred to in the second Report of the Committee on Ministerial Exchanges:

Hingham, March 1846.

REV.

Dear Sir—Agreeably to the request of the First Parish in Hingham, I have much pleasure in communicating to you the enclosed copy of a Letter addressed to the Parish, with the Report and record of their proceedings thereon, at their late annual meeting. In christian bonds,

Very respectfully, your friend and brother.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Hingham, April 3d, 1846.

REV. MR. RICHARDSON,

Dear Sir—Your letter with a communication from your Parish afforded me much pleasure, as it gave evidence of a desire on the part of your people to second your endeavors to extend the spirit of Christian fellowship,' and cultivate that charity which is the life of the Gospel of our Blessed Redeemer.

The communication was laid before the Universalist Society, and in accordance with their wishes I would say that it has long been the practice of clergymen of our denomination to exchange with others of a different faith, when solicited so to do, and that it would give us satisfaction to have a liberal spirit pervade all the religious societies of this town.

With pleasure therefore, I hold myself in readiness to exchange services when it shall suit your convenience.

Yours in the Gospel,

J. W. TALBOT.

So. Hingham, 12 April 1846.

Rev. Joseph Richardson,

Dear Sir—Enclosed is the copy of the action of the 2d Parish relative to the proposals made to it through you on Mar. 20, 1846, which we have the honor to transmit in the name of the Second Parish.

Respectfully,

JOSEPH WILDER,
PETER HERSEY JUN'R,
JOHN L. RUSSELL,
} Committee Second Parish.

To Messrs. Solo. Lincoln, Benja. Parker, Scarlet Hudson, John K. Corbett, Chas. Fearing, Benja. Thomas, Caleb Hobart Jr., Nehemiah Ripley, Elijah Burr, Thomas Loud, Jedidiah Lincoln, Luther Stephenson, David Fearing, Chas. Gill and Martin Fearing, Committee of 1st Parish, on the subject of mutual exchanges, &c.

Gentlemen—In answer to your communication of March 20, 1846, furnished us by your Parish Clerk, relative to a proposal of exchange of pulpits with the several denominations of Christians in this town, we respectfully

REPLY,

That a similar action was taken on this subject at two distinct Parish meetings of the Second Parish, as follows, viz:

At a legal meeting of the 2d Parish on March 8, 1836, it was

"*Voted*, That the Parish are willing that the Pastor elect exchange with ministers of all denominations, particularly with those of this town."—*Parish Records p.* 204.

And at a legal meeting of the Second Parish on April 8, 1837,

"*Voted*, To adopt the following resolutions:

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Society, Christians of all denominations ought to fellowship together.

Resolved, That in case we invite any minister to settle with us, we will request him so to fellowship."

Parish Records, p. 207.

From the sentiments expressed in these votes and resolutions, the Second Parish have never seen fit to deviate at any subsequent time, nor do they see any present reasons for change, so that they accordingly remain in force now.

Deeming any other action on this subject needless, we would remain very truly

Your friends and Brethren in the cause of Christ,

JOSEPH WILDER,
PETER HERSEY JUN'R,
JOHN LEWIS RUSSELL,
} Committee chosen by the 2d Parish to reply.

Hingham, April 17th, 1846.

To the Rev. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, Pastor of the First Cong. Society in Hingham.

Rev. and Dear Sir—It has become my duty to inform the members of the Parish of which you are Pastor, of certain resolves adopted by the Third Cong. Society, in reference to a communication addressed to them by the First Parish and read

on Sunday the fifth of this month. These resolves, adopted on Sunday the twelfth of this month without a dissenting voice, are as follows:

Resolved, That, so far as there is expressed in the communication from the First Parish in this town to this Parish, read on Sunday April fifth 1846, a desire to live in peace, and to carry the principles of Christian justice and mercy into the common intercourse and relations of life, we cordially respond thereto.

Resolved, That, in existing circumstances, to accept the proposition for an exchange of services between the ministers on the Lord's day would not be compatible with the welfare of this Society nor promote an increase of harmony either between these two Societies or in this town.

Resolved, That the Pastor be requested to communicate these resolves to the First Parish through their Pastor.

I wish to add, on my own authority, a few words, addressed to yourself and your Parish. I consider the question, with whom, and when, exchanges shall be made, as one, generally within the exercise of the pastor's discretion, to be determined by his own convenience and his judgment concerning what is suited to edify the people and promote what he believes to be the object of Christian ministrations. For peculiar reasons, too obvious to be specified here, I have never felt the particular exchange brought to view in the communication of the First Parish, to be within the exercise of my general and usual discretion. I wish it to be understood, however, that there is no obstacle to it in my own personal feelings. And I have never felt that I was denying the Christian name and character to those with whom I have not exchanged.

There is an obstacle, however, to the measure proposed in the opinion of a portion of the Third Cong. Society concerning the construction which might be put upon it. The grounds of that opinion, it does not belong to me to present here, nor to pass any judgment upon their sufficiency or insufficiency. I will only say, that in this particular case, I should not feel justified in disregarding it by any summary exercise of my privilege and power as the minister of a Parish, even if it were entertained only by a small minority. I infer from the tenor of Mr. RICHARDSON'S communication to his parish, that he is prepared to do justice to the feeling here expressed on my own part. I refer to his remark, that "should his proposal not meet the general approbation of his parish, or should it give serious displeasure to any, he should not wish to press it with urgency."

Whatever may be the individual desire of any in the Third Society in regard to accepting the proposition made, provided it could be done with general concurrence, we are united in thinking that to entertain it, while such apprehensions exist as are very manifest and strong, would not be one of the things which make for peace. It ought to be said however that those whose opposition to it is most decided, generally, disclaim personal hostility as its cause. They unite with others in the wish for the preservation of peace among neighbors. They profess to wish for the maintenance of that kind spirit which is so essential to the happiness and virtue of persons mingling in daily intercourse, and which depends, perhaps, even more upon the prudence and Christian conduct of the members of the respective societies than upon an exchange of pulpit services. To this end let us all co-operate. I do not feel that I am not in Christian fellowship with you, because I do not exchange with you.

It has been and will be, among the highest pleasures of my life, to labor with you for the promotion of any of the Christian objects dear to me. And for your happiness in all relations, for your welfare in the present and the future world you have my sincere prayer.

Your Christian Friend and Brother,

OLIVER STEARNS,

Minister of the Third Cong. Society.

Hingham, April 18, 1846.

Dear Sir—Enclosed is a copy of the record of the action taken by the First Baptist Society upon the communication received from your Parish, and upon my reply, which is also enclosed, which I preferred to address to yourself personally.

Respectfully yours,

SERENO HOWE.

Rev. Joseph Richardson.

Hingham, April 19th, 1846.

A communication was presented to the First Baptist Society from the First Unitarian Parish in this town, and read by our Pastor. After which the following resolutions were offered and adopted:

Whereas we have received a communication from the First Unitarian Parish, in this town, upon the subject of an exchange with our Pastor.

Whereas we have confidence in our Pastor that he will not violate those principles which should guide an Evangelical minister in his intercourse with ministers of other denominations,

Therefore,

Resolved, that we see no occasion and have no desire to change our practice of leaving to our Pastor the care of his ministerial exchanges.

Having listened to a reply (to a communication of the First Unitarian Parish) addressed by our Pastor to the Rev. Mr. RICHARDSON,

Resolved that we approve its principles and sustain our Pastor in the course he has concluded to adopt.

JOSEPH RIPLEY, Clerk, of the First Baptist Society.

HINGHAM, April 1846.

Respected Friend,—The documents you put into my hands have received the attention their importance demands. Couched in courteous and respectful terms, they require a courteous and respectful reply.

I appreciate the amiable spirit, which, I doubt not has actuated you in the course you have adopted, in reference to an exchange of pulpit services, with the ministers of the several congregations in this town. From that spirit I am persuaded, that you would not wish me to accept your invitation, if by so doing I should do violence to my conscientious convictions of duty.

An exchange of pulpits between those who profess to be ministers of the Gospel, seems to me, to be a declaration to the world, that there is an agreement, in the great fundamental doctrines of religion. We cannot consistently admit, to our pulpits, those who deny what we consider essential to Christianity. On this principle not a few of your denomination (your-

self among the number, if I mistake not) would decline an exchange with Mr. THEODORE PARKER. I fear, that the same rule applies to the case now under consideration. I am bound to consider you an Unitarian and to be guided in my decision, by comparing the generally received opinions of the people with whom you stand connected, with what I understand to be the doctrines of the Bible.

A bare mention of some points, upon which my Church and myself differ from your denomination, will show that we hold doctrines considered by us essential, which have no place in your Theology.

From the teachings of the inspired volume we feel ourselves bound to believe in the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost, the Atonement, a Radical change of Heart, in Regeneration, Experimental Religion, &c. These doctrines I consider fundamental. Any hope of salvation, held out to the sinner disconnected with them I deem a false hope and one liable to lead men down to eternal ruin. With these views could I open my pulpit to the denial of the doctrines named, or by exchanging say to the world, that I believe the system which does not contain them is, in the essentials of Christianity sound?

Neither, my dear sir, do I think, that an exchange between us would tend to promote harmony. If we preached for each other, we must as honest men speak our minds. I feel myself bound to proclaim the sentiments above named wherever I preach. I have no sermons, in which, what I consider the evangelical system, is lost sight of. Therefore what I should preach one Sabbath you must deny the next, and what of fundamental truth,

in my estimation, you should deny I should speedily assert. Would this tend to promote peace between ourselves personally; would it promote peace between our people?

We have lived together during the few years of my residence, in this town, in peace and harmony. We have not agreed in opinion, but we have never made our differences, in religion, an occasion of angry contention between ourselves.

May our friendly feelings never be less. I presume they will not. Though so much your junior, in years, may I not be permitted to say, that it would give me unspeakable satisfaction to know, that you were possessed of precious hopes, like those which, by the grace of God, I cherish, reared upon the same basis.

In conclusion, I feel myself in duty bound to say, that while I feel the kindness, on your part, which prompted an offer of exchange of pulpit services, I must respectfully decline.

With much esteem and respect,

Truly yours,

SERENO HOWE.

Rev. JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

The foregoing are true copies of the originals now in my possession.

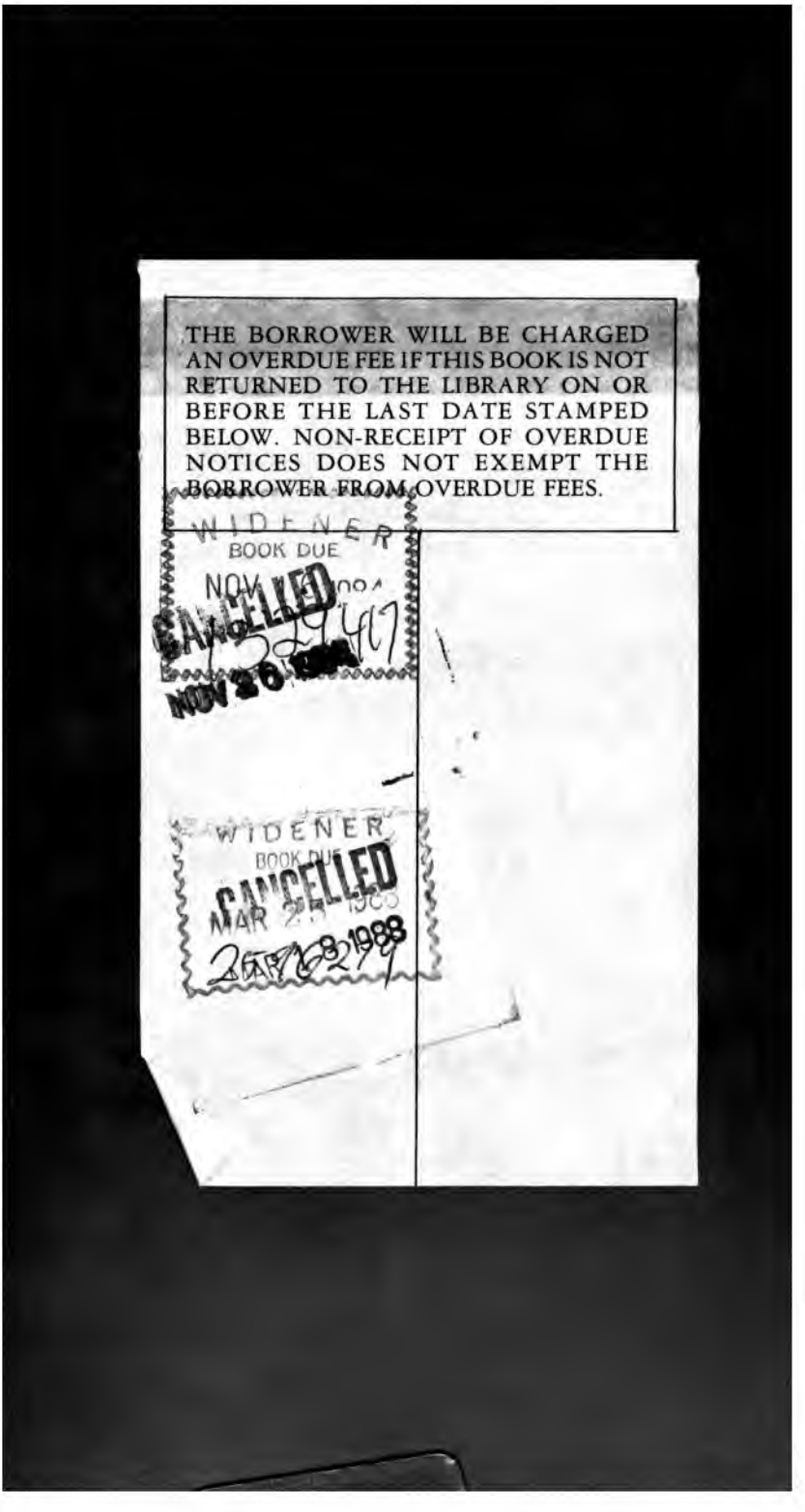
JAMES S. LEWIS,

Clerk of the First Parish in Hingham.

Hingham, March 16, 1847.






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